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Homer: Past and Present.

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ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY





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# HOMER

**PAST**

*and*

**PRESENT**



**OLD COVERED BRIDGE**

1976

## HOMER BICENTENNIAL SCHEDULE

Jan. 11-24	Antique parlor and kitchen furnished with antiques from area residents
Feb. 15-21	Antique Valentines and Newspapers from 1909-1940
Mar. 7-13	Memories Week — Old photographs, programs, posters, Homerians and pictures from 1913, Woman's Club Display and Old Homer Park
April 4	Several old and new crafts demonstrated in the hall, handmade articles on display all week
April 7	Woodcarving by Ken and Dorothy MacInnes
May 16-22	History of Homer, Champaign County, Illinois, and the U.S.A.
May 22	Movie "1776" sponsored by the Library and Recreation Boards will be shown
Memorial Day	Parade sponsored by the American Legion
June 13	Flag Program 2:00 p.m.
July 4	Union Church Services
July 4	Annual Freedom Celebration sponsored by the Recreation Board at the Park
Sept. 11-18	Indian Artifacts from the Homer area
Sept. 11	Krazy Daze - sponsored by the Lion's Club
Oct. 10-23	Antique Bedroom and dining room furnished with antiques loaned by area residents
Nov. 14-20	Small Antique Show
Dec.	Christmas Display

## BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Bobbi Newlin - Eva Chism - Co-Chairmen  
Gloran Lewis - Secretary  
Peggy Jones - Treasurer  
James Fish  
Dean Chism  
Dale and Mildred Wolf  
Dale and Nondus Wakefield  
Ken and Dorothy MacInnes

## BICENTENNIAL BOOK COMMITTEE

Dean and Eva Chism - Co-Chairmen  
Ruth Allen  
Theresa Wilson  
Helen C. Baird  
Edna Lewis

UNIVERSITY OF  
ILLINOIS LIBRARY  
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ILL. HIST. SURVEY

## IN RETROSPECT

The town of Homer is what it is because of our forebearers. It will progress today as the people plan today. Our responsibility is great but this responsibility is no greater than the responsibility of the early settlers.

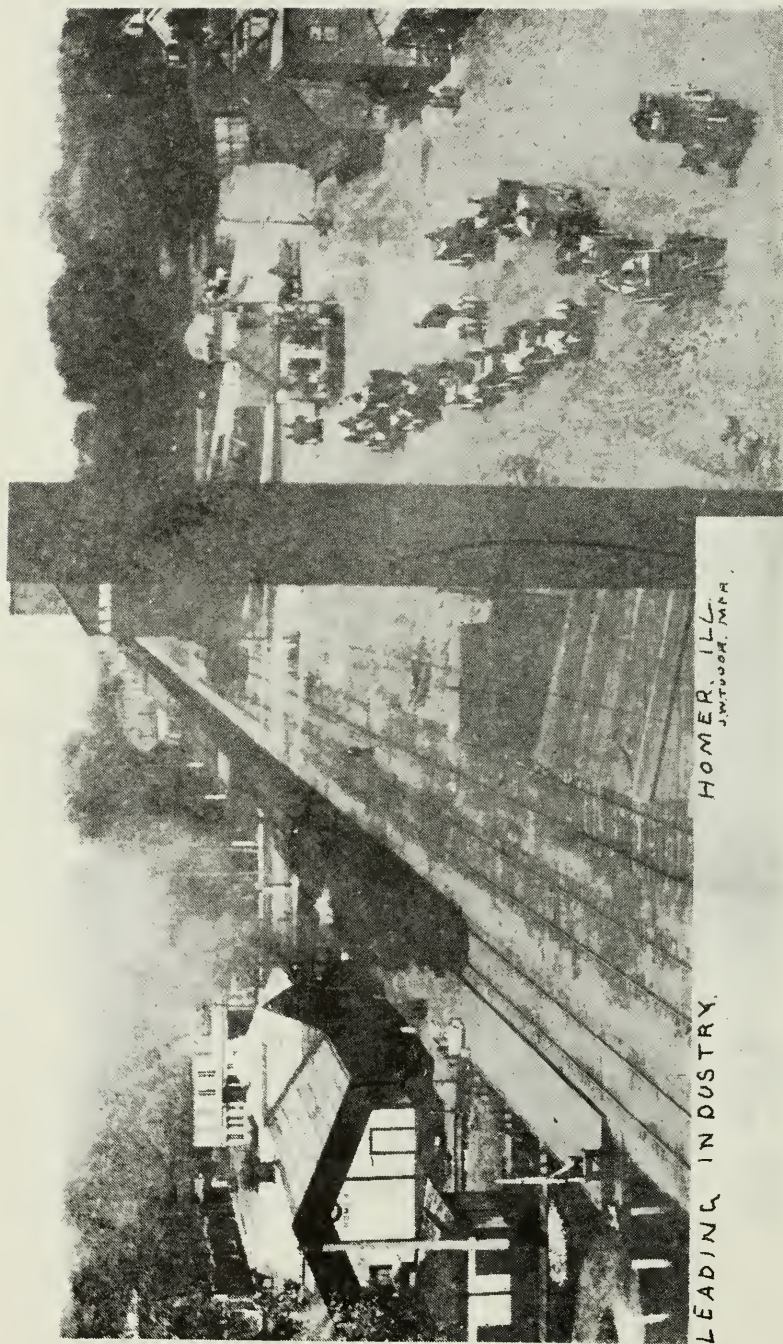
In the early 1800's the people did not run because of the hardships that were present. Those early founders of Homer worked hard to give us this town of which they could be proud.

Portions of this book have been reprinted from the 1955 Centennial Book.

The Bicentennial Committee felt that since many people are new to Homer that reprinting and updating the Centennial Book would be a worthwhile project. Any profits from the sale of this book will be used to help establish a local museum.







LEADING INDUSTRY.

HOMER, ILL.  
JANUARY, 1914.

The town of Homer moved because of the railroad. Here you can see one of the changes that took place after the railroad came.



## HISTORY OF HOMER

Our township was first settled by a man named Gentry, who in 1827 built the first white man's cabin. The second house was built by Hiram Jackson, both of the above early settlers remaining but a few years. Soon after, others were attracted to this part of our country, among whom were Moses Thomas and Thomas Butler, all of whom came to stay.

In 1836 about nine-tenths of the land in the county belonged to the government, and was subject to entry at the land office in Danville, at \$1.25 per acre. In 1836, M. D. Coffeen settled on the Salt Fork where the old town of Homer was afterwards laid off, and after felling timber and clearing the ground erected the first store house in the town. His general stock of goods soon attracted the attention of a large part of the citizens of the county, who favored him with their patronage. About the same year Moses Thomas erected a saw and grist mill which ran about eight months of the year, and being the pioneer one in the county contributed its part to the building up of our town. A few years later, Mr. Thomas attached to his mill a carding machine which carded the wool, grown over a large extent of country, into rolls to be spun by the maidens of the land into yarn, from which the matrons wove the jeans and linsey to clothe their families.

The first school in the township was taught by Abram Johnson in 1829. The house was located  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles northwest of the town of Old Homer, built of logs and had greased paper windows. There were 15 pupils and the tuition was \$2.50 a term. The first school house built in the town of Old Homer was in 1838, in which school was kept from four to six months a year. It was a frame structure, the seats of which were made by putting legs in slabs procured at Uncle Moses Thomas' saw mill.

In 1837, M. D. Coffeen formed a partnership with one Samuel Groendyke and they decided to plat a town at the intersection of Sections 4 and 5, Township 18, and Sections 32 and 33, Township 19, a mile north of the present village of Homer. There are several explanations as to the naming of the town, but the one which seems to have come most directly from Mr. Coffeen himself is to this effect. One day in 1837, after the proprietors had located their general store, they commenced to talk about putting up a blacksmith shop and possibly a hotel, as well as platting a little town. Mr. Groendyke remarked "Yes, that plan would be more homer to me" (meaning more homelike than it was then, with no place at which to stop). At this, Mr. Coffeen, who is also said to have been somewhat of a scholar and a great admirer of the Greek Philosopher, replied, "Well, then Homer it shall be."

In 1845, the citizens of the town by private subscription built the first bridge across the Salt Fork, at a cost of \$450. At the time there was a semi-weekly mail conveyed by stage whenever the Salt Fork was in favorable condition. The bridge secured regular mails as well as the general accommodation of the public. Up to this time our town was sparsely settled, the improvements being conferred to lands either in or adjacent to the timber, a common opinion at that day prevailing that the prairies were too

bleak and cold to ever think of building a home upon, and anyone daring to predict that they would ever be even cultivated would have been considered a fanatic, if not a fool. The prairies were regarded as only fit for the grazing of stock and a home for deer, wolves and prairie chickens which roamed in countless numbers.

The grist mill was the cause of the town being started and in a short while the new town flourished like a green bay tree, until the talk of surveyors coming through the country mapping out a route for a railroad set the inhabitants to speculating upon the direction the surveyors would take when they came through. In the year 1854, the final survey of the Great Western, now Wabash Railroad was made, and it missed the town of some 200 souls about 1½ miles to the south. The survey went through the land of M. D. Coffeen and he therefore began to think of a plan to start a town or have the other one moved. He proposed to the owners of property in the old town to exchange with them a like number of lots in the new town, which proposition was accepted by nearly all.

The greater part of the winter of 1854-1855 was consumer in getting ready to move. Skids were made to put under the houses and plans to utilize the large number of cattle belonging to the farmers were perfected. No snow fell until January and it was the plan to slide the buildings over the snow to their new positions. With a heavy fall of snow in January, the actual work of transporting the town began. It was participated in by the entire community. Within six weeks the work was completed and every house in the town was given nearly the same relative position in the town on the railroad. The only building that was difficult to move was the Methodist Church. While the men were getting this building ready, a string of oxen was attached to the house belonging to Mr. Thomas and it was moved to its new location while the women folk got dinner ready. Mr. Thomas told that the weights were taken out of the clock, the dishes were packed so they would not break and wood and water were brought into the house so the preparations for the noon day meal went on uninterrupted. The total cost of moving was only \$5.00 per house. One doctor who did not move at the time of the general exodus moved the following fall and it cost him about \$300.00.

With the coming of spring there was nothing left of the old town but the old mill and the doctor's house. The railroad came through in the summer of 1855 and the people knew that they had made a good move. Time has confirmed their belief for the town of Homer is one of the prettiest and cleanest towns in Champaign County.

How the second village of Homer looked when it was very young is thus described by the editor of the Urbana Union in his issue of October 25, 1855: "On Tuesday of this week we visited this town for the first time since its location on the prairie. The present site, on a high and commanding point on the Great Western Railroad, is considered much healthier than the old town. We were informed by the physicians that amidst the great amount of sickness the present year the town has been comparatively free from it. It is expected that the cars will soon pay the town a visit, and that the whistle of the locomotive will wake to new life the

business of the town and surrounding country, which is already good. Several new houses are already being built, and many more will be commenced when facilities for getting lumber are better.

"Our friend, M. D. Coffeen, Esq., has just finished a new and commodious building for the accommodation of his extensive business, which we admire very much on account of the convenience of its arrangement and the superior beauty of the workmanship. The carpenter work was done by Mr. Cyrus Hays and the painting, which is really elegant, by John Towner. Besides Mr. Coffeen's drygoods store, there are several others and a drugstore by Judge John B. Thomas, all doing a fine business. A steam sawmill has, during the summer, been put in operation, which is turning out a vast amount of ties for the Great Western Railroad."

A covered wooden bridge across Salt Fork was built about 1859, replacing the original bridge. These bridges were located near one of the early trails of Champaign County which was prominent during the early settlement of the state.

In 1863, the covered bridge was rebuilt by George Spraker, who with several assistants hauled the lumber from the railroad to the same site and swung the arch across the stream. Before there was any bridge over the river, those who wished to cross went down the stream about a quarter mile to a ford which enabled them to pass safely. This ford lay just below the place where the dam was later built.

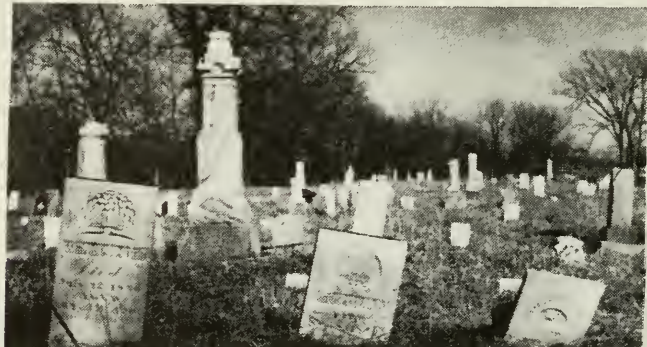
The bridge collapsed April 6, 1934, and was dismantled. Because it possessed exceptional historic interest, a record of the bridge was deposited in the library of Congress for permanent reference.



Some of the pioneers of Homer are W. C. Custer, who came to Homer in 1828 and was proprietor of a livery stable in 1856; Dr. William A. Conkey, a farmer in 1852; Dr. James Core, physician in 1853; M. D. Coffeen, proprietor of elevator and flouring mill in 1853; Henry White, farmer, 1851; Martin Custer, farmer and stock raiser, 1836; R. C. Wright, farmer in 1850; Isaac Brown, farmer, 1857; Nathan W. Cockayne, farmer in 1885; E. D. Fisher, director and cashier of First National Bank of Homer, 1883; Samuel McKee, 1851; Dr. P. C. Mosier, physician, 1851; Jacob Tindall, farmer, 1876; H. J. Wiggins, farmer, 1878; Thomas L. Butler, Joseph Stayton, Nicholas Yount, Dr. H. C. Shaw.

In 1859 the local newspaper started as the Homer Journal. George Knapp was publisher. Subsequent owners were John W. Summers and W. H. Rhoades. In 1877 the name of the paper was changed to the Enterprise and was published in turn by John C. Cronis, I. A. Baker, Willard L. Sampson, J. B. Morgan, J. R. Martin, C. H. Wallace, J. G. White, B. F. Morgan, H. H. Clore, Phillip Clore, and Lowell Terry, present owner.

The burial ground for the people of Old Homer was located on the bluff west of the old town. It is still used for burial but is not under perpetual care. The G.A.R. Cemetery, now owned by the American Legion Post 290, is located at the east edge of town. It is well kept. The earliest records have been lost, but the first burial was in 1886. There are burials that date back as far as 1846, the people having been brought here from other cemeteries.









## OLD HOMER HOUSE

The Homer Hotel was moved from Old Homer to a site now occupied by Benner's Garage. It was operated as a boarding and rooming house, but this building burned in the early 1900's.

The exact date of the installation of the telephone exchange is not known but we have secured the following from the October 25th, 1899 edition of the Homer Enterprise: "Dr. G. L. Williamson, who is always quick to take advantage of modern methods and the latest practical way of doing things, was the first subscriber to the White Telephone Exchange. The doctor took a phone first because he believed the telephone would be beneficial to his business. And now since he is receiving from one to five calls for professional services over the phone daily and as high as three in one night, he feels that he did not err in his judgment. What the telephone had done for the doctor, it will do for all other lines of business in Homer. The telephone is not only a great labor and time saver, but a business bringer as well. No business man should think of doing without one." J. G. White owned the first exchange but before the exchange was installed a telephone was put into the E. T. Mudge drug store and it is recorded that the first call was made to Danville for an order of drugs which were received the next day via Wabash Railroad. Mr. White sold out his exchange in 1912 to Douglas Telephone Company and 26 years ago it was sold to a subsidiary of the General Telephone Company who now operates the system. Two of the first operators were Emma Willis and Emma Palmer. New dial telephones were recently put into operation, thus bringing modern telephone service to Homer on its 100th birthday.

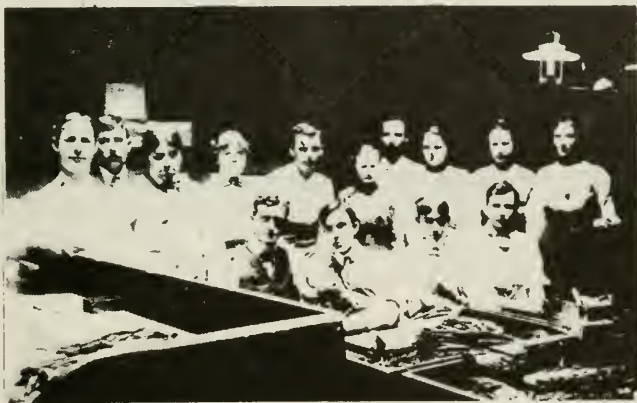




First Telephone Exchange

A tile factory and a cigar factory flourished in Homer at one time. The tile factory was operated under the name of Homer Brick and Tile Works. It was located east of the stockyard and was operated by G. B. Yount. Good building brick could be purchased for \$6.00 per thousand. Orders were also taken and filled promptly for 10 and 12 inch tile.

The first tobacco factory was in the upstairs of the Paxton building. The building burned in 1900 and the factory moved to the Gilman (Hess) Building. Joe Elliott started the first factory and later sold out to A. W. Rosenbaum, who continued it for many years.

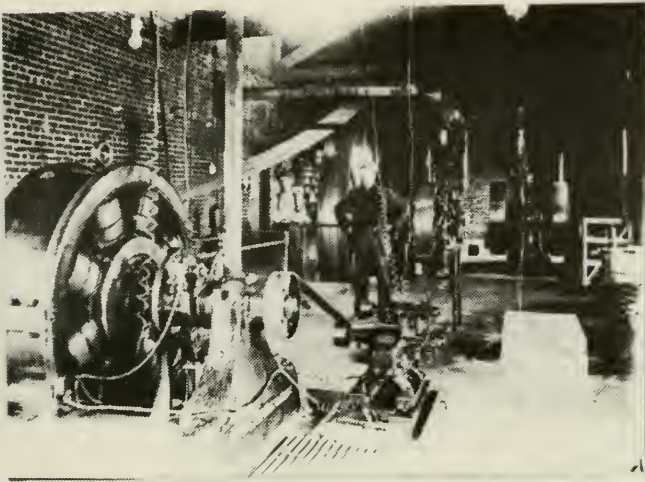


Cigar Factory



Front of Cigar Factory  
(This building stood south of present Post  
Office on Lot known as Park.)

On June 23, 1889, a contract to furnish electric lighting for the village of Homer was given to J. D. Wallace, S. T. Weir, and M. A. Goff, principals, H. J. Wiggins and J. M. Boggess, sureties, in the amount of \$5,000. The first light plant was located back of the present Smoot Lumber Yard, and J. H. Boggess was the manager, Berl Railsback and Sam Harris were boiler men, Barton M. Parrish and Milo Lincicum were electricians. The plant was erected just east of the Homer Grain Company. This plant burned in 1928. Mr. Bowen sold out to U. S. Thompson who later sold to James Capel. Later the Central Illinois Electric and Gas Company purchased the plant, etc.



As time progressed, Homer profited. In 1928 a concrete road was built from Kankakee to Kansas. This was called route 49. The new road crossed Salt Fork on a new steel bridge and was in the same location as the old interurban bridge.

The Homer Waterworks was started in 1937. Many people questioned the advisability of such a venture, but by its completion in 1939, the people were well aware of the wise choice that had been made.



### Modern Bridge across Salt Fork

In 1904 the interurban tracks were laid from Ogden to Homer, connecting Homer with both Danville and Champaign. The station was located where the Bowling Lanes now are and regular hourly runs were made to meet trains from Danville and Champaign.





Interurban Station



In its early years, Homer boasted of a fine livery stable. Fine horses and buggies were for hire. The Stevens Livery Stable was located where the Christian Church now stands.



Livery Stable

(The following article appeared in a 1936 issue of the Danville Commercial News.)

## HOMER IN 1836 BOASTED ONLY COUNTY STORE

Old Town on Banks of Salt  
Fork River was one of  
Few Trading Places

HOMER—One hundred years ago, 1836, Homer, then located on the banks of the Salt Fork River, boasted of having the one and only store in Champaign County. This store was operated by M. D. Coffeen.

A store had been opened in Urbana by T. R. Webber in 1834 and one near the site of Sidney and one north of Big Grove previously, but all had ceased operation before this time.

At this time persons residing in Champaign County purchased their necessities from Danville, Bloomington, Decatur or at Homer. This merchandise came principally from Philadelphia and was hauled by wagon over the mountains to Evansville, Ind., and then by wagon to its final destination.

Prices received for these goods are quite in contrast with those of today. Good calico prints retailed at from 35¢ to 40¢ per yard, the coarsest of brown muslin from 35¢ to 40¢ per yard. Sugar and molasses, purchased in New Orleans, were sold at 4¢ per pound and 37¢ per gallon, respectively.

Principal markets for farm produce were Chicago and Cincinnati. After delivery the farmer received from 10¢ to 25¢ per bushel for corn, 25¢ to 50¢ per bushel for wheat and from 25¢ to \$1.50 per hundred for hogs.

By an act of the State Legislature Champaign County was organized January 20, 1833. At this time Moses Thomas, operator of a saw mill on the Salt Fork River, was appointed treasurer and also held office of Probate Judge.

J. B. Thomas served as Probate Judge and later as County Judge. M. D. Coffeen served as Associate County Judge for one term and R. C. Wright served as Sheriff. All of these above mentioned men are from Homer.

The first known settler in Homer Township was a man named Gentry, who built a cabin north of Salt Fork River in 1827. In 1828 Mr. Osborn, Mr. Harris and Thomas Butler moved into the township.

The honor of performing the first marriage ceremony in the county, that of John Bryan to Matilda Busey, was accorded to Moses Thomas on July 25, 1833. His son, J. B. Thomas, taught the first school north of Big Grove in 1829. The first wagon was made by M. D. Coffeen in 1837.

At this time this township was much larger than it now is. It occupied an area four miles wide and 18 miles long containing 72 square miles and extending south to the Douglas County line. Broad Lands for the most part was located within this area.

This farm containing 26,500 acres was first improved by M. L. Sullivant who sold the same body to A. T. Alexander of Morgan County, Ill., in 1866. This farm extended 7 miles east and west and 6½ miles north and south in a solid block with the exception of 1660 owned by other parties. This farm was valued at \$800,000 at this time.

At a later period the area of the township was cut considerably both from the north and the south. The area of Broad Lands was but off from the south side and given to another township.

The following excerpt is taken from Lathrop's Champaign County Directory published in 1870 relative to the above mentioned prices and current day opportunities:

"The markets, if markets they could be called, were mainly Chicago and Cincinnati. Corn, wheat and hogs were the principal articles of export, while whiskey, tobacco, and groceries, were the imports. Farmers disposed of their corn, after drawing it to Chicago, at from 10 to 25 cents per bushel; wheat, from 25 to 50 cents per bushel, and their hogs from 25 cents to \$1.50 per hundred, and all things else in proportion. . . .

"The early settlers had few advantages, and few temptations to lead them into excess and extravagance, while the privileges and advantages of the present bring the unmeasured evil of extravagance and debt."

Evidently times were changing as fast in 1870 as they are now.

### A \$5 GROCERY BILL

That HENDERSON will sell and has been selling to his patrons:

6 pounds Java Coffee .....	.90
25 pound sack of flour .....	.50
½ pound pepper .....	.15
5 pound sack of salt .....	.05
3 pounds Rice .....	.25
½ pound Tea .....	.30
1 Broom .....	.25
1 Gallon Syrup .....	.35
1 Gallon Coal Oil .....	.13
5 pounds oat meal with bowl .....	.25
3 pounds crackers .....	.25
1 sack meal .....	.12
1 box of yeast foam .....	.05
6 pounds dry salt meat .....	.50
25 pounds granulated sugar .....	.95
	<u>\$5.00</u>

The above bill is one that I sold a short time ago and added the lower item as an inducement for cash buyers. This and similar bills will be sold at any time for cash.

A. Henderson, Homer

(Above appeared in Jan. 31, 1905 issue of Homer Enterprise.)



## HOMER IN 1880

How we found her, Whom we met  
and What they were doing.

By a Reporter for the Champaign County Herald

All of our readers know the location of Homer, and that it is a town of no small importance; but few, not having made a special visit there, are aware of its size and business facilities. Homer is the largest town outside of Urbana and Champaign, in the County, and numbers among her professional men, ministers, teachers, lawyers, and doctors, those who rank with the best in the county, as is shown when they come in contact with each other. As for the business men, although their qualities are not so publicly and widely known, their gentlemanly manners and thriving trade show them second to none from a commercial stand point.

Upon our arrival we were hospitably greeted by that prince of good fellows, C. B. Butler, who kindly introduced us to all the business men and did much to make our stay pleasant, as well as profitable. Mr. Butler is the happy one of whose marriage to Miss Whitlock, we noticed in our columns recently. The "honey moon" is not past, and Cal thinks it will be long lasting. While spending the evening with him and his estimable lady, some of the charming belles of the village serenaded all, and we can not speak too highly of their singing, especially one song in which pathos was so expressive.

Of the business men, their number compels us to speak briefly, and also promiscuously, as we visited them or met them on the street.

The Citizen's Bank, we found under the management of its owner, Mr. S. Plant. This being the only bank to do business for a large scope of country it receives an extended patronage. Here we met Mr. E. N. Raynor, superintendent of the Broadland Farm, who was in on business. Mr. Raynor is a pleasant gentleman and staunch republican.

M. B. Custer, formerly of the firm Custer & Woods, continues running their store of general merchandise.

Mr. George Hammill had moved his stock of furniture to his new store where he has every facility for handling a good assortment of furniture. He is a man of very few words in business, trades liberally and quickly so as to have more time for having fun.

Cal called Mr. Mudge from across the street to show us his new hardware store to be opened up for business the day following. The store is to be run under the firm name of Mudge & Co.

J. R. Ocheltree is a pleasant old gentleman, running a furniture store, and makes undertaking a specialty. He keeps a line of robes and coffins in advance of most stores in ordinary towns. Mr. Ocheltree had recently discontinued taking the Herald on account of having so much reading matter, and for the sake of economy; but without soliciting, said he must renew, as it filled a want no other paper could, and he found when it was gone he could not do without it. A subscription is seldom discontinued, and

when it is, in a majority of cases, as in this, they renew at the first opportunity.

Chas. J. Tinkham deals in hardware, stoves and tinware, and agricultural implements. Mr. Tinkham has been in business 14 years, and makes it a success.

C. P. McClure and J. H. Sharp are the harness men, each having a good shop.

Jacob Day and A. Sites are the enterprising butchers and their shops are samples of neatness. Mr. Day has the finest butcher shop we have seen in the country, and there are but few shops of any kind in this county we have not been in.

Waples & Elliott and Upp & Co. represent the jewelry business. Each firm has a good line of goods and seems equally prosperous.

While it seems we are classing all off in couples we may speak of Oscar Lewis and J. Seibold who do the custom boat and shoe making, each in his own shop.

A. T. Custer deals in groceries and queensware, and to speak of his success and enterprise would be but a repetition of what we said in the beginning of all the business men.

Mr. Butler next took us to call on his brother-in-law, F. M. Smith, who has a fine drug store. His building is of brick, with large glass front and is quite an ornament to the town. As Mr. Smith is a solid republican, was receiving two copies of our paper, and owed us nothing; our visit and chat with him would not be taken as a matter of selfish interest.

E. Stokes & Bro., have a fine variety of groceries, queensware, stoves and tinware, and boots and shoes.

Mrs. J. W. Reed is in the millinery business. Mr. Reed is a photographer and expects to open up in business as soon as suitable rooms can be procured.

Mr. Jones and Mr. Persons are colored gentlemen, each running a barber shop. They read the Herald along with other papers, are good citizens and well respected.

A good bakery and restaurant is run by T. J. Dailey.

We called on R. H. Wines, who runs a tailor shop. Mr. Wines has been there since 1847 and has no notion of leaving.

At the extensive store of Hopkins & Ball we first formed the acquaintance of one of the clerks, Mr. T. O. Hopkins, who is withal a fine looking young man and quite as clever as he looks. He showed us through four divisions of the store, where everything is tastefully arranged, and we doubt if the store has an equal of its kind—general merchandise—in the county. This firm runs branch stores at Sidney and Philo, which like the headquarters are prosperous. We afterwards met one of the proprietors, Mr. Hopkins, and several more pleasant clerks. Mr. H. informed us that Mr. Ball was in Boston, his old stomping ground, making purchases and transacting other business. We took from the firm a large order for printing stationery, which others may have an opportunity to examine who want to see how cute and handy it is put up for use.

L. McWhorter makes a good business of repairing furniture, and still takes time to read the Herald, with other papers, to

keep posted.

A. C. Thayer is proprietor of the Homer House, which is the only regular hotel in town. Mr. Thayer formerly kept hotel in Champaign, is a pleasant man and keeps a good house. A good boarding house is kept by Mrs. R. Hummer.

E. T. Mudge has a drug store and also sells in connection, in separate apartments, books, wall paper, etc.

Having met him before we did not fail to call several times to see Mr. J. A. Baker, proprietor of that enterprising sheet, the Homer Enterprise. Mr. Baker and all the rest of the boys are clever and have just the material in them to make a spicy paper.

J. E. Spraker & Co. keeps a good line of furniture, and, as is usual with furniture men, supplies the wants of people with wooden ulsters.

We did what some one said we dared not do, i.e. tackle Dr. W. M. Rawlinson for a subscription, since he is strongly democratic. We soon convinced the gentleman he should have us remind him of his sins at least once a week and he agreed to take a half dollar's worth to begin on, and since we give a big dose for the money at present, and pretty strong too, we hope to do him good. If it be true that rand democrats are bad men we think him an exception proving the rule. Dr. Rawlinson receives his title from his profession as dentist. The doctor is not an ordinary tooth cobbler that grew up in three months, but a graduate of the Baltimore Dental College and an artist in his profession.

We made quite a little call at the Wabash depot where we found Mr. J. M. Ocheltree, very busy as station agent and operator. He has for his assistants a handsome and bright little boy and a no less pretty and intelligent little girl, of whom we should speak, were it not that owing to their youth and extreme modesty, we promised to speak nothing of them in our notes. They will doubtless thank us for this kindness, and when they grow older, permit us to tell our readers of their excellencies.

Just over the railroad we met Mr. Joseph Thomas, the enterprising lumberman. It was just nine years that day, since he had begun business there, and taking a retrospective view of the past, seemed to make him happy. If our readers will notice his advertisement in our columns they may see how enterprising men value printer's ink.

Mr. D. Coffeen Jr., and J. H. Caldwell are buying and shipping grain. O. J. Gillman expects to be in the business soon and an association of farmers are expecting an extensive grain elevator to be run in their interests. Since the vicinity of Homer has the best corn crops in the county, and these facilities for handling it are offered, they may all look for a continuance of prosperous times.

We found A. Thompson in his well ordered store of stoves, farm implements and buggies.

At M. C. Thomas' store we met his genial clerk, who showed us through his large store of general merchandise. This store, like the rest, is well stocked and well patronized.

F. H. Gray, instead of keeping a little of everything, confines his business almost wholly to the grocery line.

A. W. and E. S. Cusick, George Evans, G. W. Myers and Mr. Unpenour, well represent the blacksmith trade. Although they are much similar in being good citizens, they represent quite a variety of other characteristics. They are republicans, democrats, and green backers; old, young and middle-aged; married, bachelors, and widowers; some have all the wives they want; another would marry if it came handy, and another is almost froze to marry; but all seemed remarkably happy, as should all who prosper at honest toil.

The medical profession is well represented by Dr's. H. C. Shaw, J. B. McCance, W. G. Dunn and Core. As everyone seemed so healthy, we could but wonder where so many could have the practice their prosperity would indicate. Doctors are very useful members of society, but if people would give nature half a chance, 50 per cent of the doctoring might be dispensed with, and all would be healthier and happier.

R. C. Wright and C. M. C. Elder, represent the legal profession.

Mrs. A. Henderson has a millinery and dress making establishment, which is one of the few places we failed to visit; but since we would have been incapable of judging, had we called, we may just as readily recommend her from what we heard from others.

Yates Bros. Store was one of the last places we visited, where we found a large stock of dry goods and clothing. These gentlemen are up with the times, and Homer people need not leave their town to find first class dress goods.

We must not fail to speak of the orderly post office and confectionery, carried on by Messrs. Core and Butler. Charlie is postmaster and Cal keeps the confectioneries and cigars, but each helps the other, which makes their relation very pleasant. We wonder Cal ever married anyone else than Charlie.

We took occasion to visit the public schools, under the principalship of Prof. G. R. Shawhan. We visited but the one room, but judging from the reputation of his assistants, and Mrs. Shawhan's known ability to govern, we should count it very good throughout. The rooms are very much crowded, there being 128 pupils in Mr. Shawhan's room. This is the worst feature about the school, and no ordinary hand at governing, could maintain as good order as is preserved. The pupils are very well behaved, bright and intelligent. With such teachers and pupils, and a well arranged school building, Homer school would be one of the best in the county. It is a success, as it is, and does credit to the town and county.

There are three churches, Methodist, Presbyterian and Christian, each of which supports a good Sunday school. We met but one of the ministers, Rev. S. H. Whitlock, pastor of the M. E. Church who seems every whit a gentleman and who is highly appreciated as a minister.

Taking it all in all, Homer is a much finer town than we had supposed it to be. There is scarcely a business or professional man in town, regardless of politics, who does not take and read the Herald. Long may the present good feeling exist.

FLINT



## HISTORY OF WABASH RAILROAD

In the 1830's, as pioneers settled in Illinois, they realized that here in their new homes was a need for better transportation facilities to move their furs, their crops and their goods to the markets along the river.

It was this problem of transportation that faced the Illinois legislature as it convened in the tiny capitol at Vandalia in the early 1830's. And the legislators divided themselves into two rabidly partisan groups.

Those whose boyhood had been spent in the river towns along the Ohio and the Mississippi were vehemently in favor of an extensive canal system. The railroad contingent was headed by Joseph Duncan, a member of Congress who sought financing for the project in New York without success. Financiers could see no gain in investing money in a railroad that would span only an unpopulated forest.

By 1834, the fight for better transportation had reached its peak. Duncan was now governor of Illinois and one of his first official acts was to recommend a network of roads, railroads, and canals for his State. Duncan's flowery oratory finally won the passage of the Illinois Internal Improvement Act, a Bill which contained authorization for the Study of the State's transportation systems.

Duncan, in 1834, succeeded in forcing approval of a steam engine railroad to be built between Quincy, on the Mississippi River, via Clayton, Mt. Sterling, Meredosia, Jacksonville, Springfield and Decatur to Danville and the Illinois-Indiana State Line. The new Railroad was to be built with State funds.

This new railroad was known as the "Northern Cross," a name chosen according to some historians, because the line surveyed for the railroad closely paralleled a well-worn trail known as the "Northern Crossing" of Illinois and often called "Northern Cross" although it was actually in the south central portion of the State. It was the only segment of the ambitious Internal Improvement Act to become a reality.

Finally, after several crew changes, the original engine—called the "ROGERS"—began to serve the 12-mile strip in more dependable fashion. In 1842, a line between Jacksonville and Springfield was completed, and in May, 1842, service from Meredosia to Springfield was made available.

The drama of the building of the Northern Cross Railroad is the first chapter in the romantic story that is the growth of the Wabash Railway System, for the lineage of the Wabash can be traced without a break to the first 12-mile strip over which engineer Fields operated a clumsy little locomotive between Meredosia and Morgan City in the fall of 1838.

The year 1847 saw the first change in the new system that was soon to become known as the Wabash. The legislature of the State of Illinois authorized the sale of the original track between Meredosia and Springfield. Nicholas H. Ridgeley was the purchaser. He paid the sum of \$21,000 for the road, changing its name to the Sangamon and Morgan Railroad.

Ridgeley's purchase turned out well, for at the time the extension of the road from Springfield to the Illinois-Indiana State Line had been temporarily abandoned by the State because of the lack of funds and a short time after his original buy, he was granted an extension of his charter to include the entire line of the Northern Cross.

Together with his new partners, Nicholas Ridgeley pushed the rehabilitation of the line between Springfield and the Illinois-Indiana State Line. Already railroad traffic was mounting in the East, and plans were underway for rapid extension of the Eastern roads to tap the rapidly-developing States of Illinois and Missouri.

Subsequently, on February 12, 1853, the name was changed to "The Great Western Railroad of Illinois" and trains started operating to Decatur on May 9, 1854. In the spring of 1855 the Sangamon River was bridged and the road completed through Homer, the first train arriving at Danville, Illinois, in November, 1856.

During its entire period of expansion east to the Mississippi River, the Wabash system served as the principal artery tapping the great "Heart of America." Other railroads entered Illinois-Indiana territory served by the Wabash and its predecessor lines, but these railroads moved only toward the most important cities of the area and the vast, undeveloped regions which today are the most productive sections of the Great "Heart" were accessible only over the tracks of the Wabash.

While the railroads east of the Mississippi were tying Toledo and the East to the river ports of Illinois and Iowa, west of the Mississippi the predecessor of the present Wabash Railway System were writing one of the greatest chapters in American Railroad history.

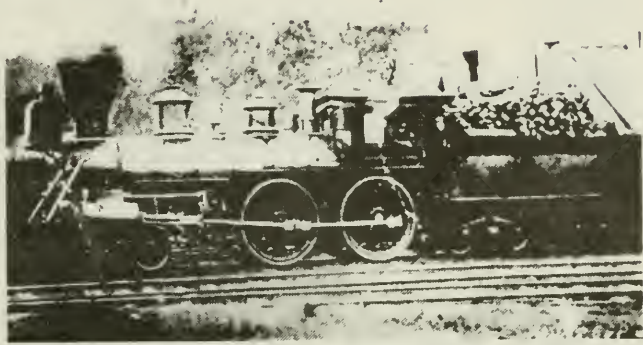
A group of pioneer railroad men in 1851 secured a charter from the State of Missouri for building the North Missouri Railroad from St. Louis to the Missouri-Iowa State Line. Actual construction commenced on the first division in May of 1854 and on the second in 1855. The first division between St. Louis and St. Charles was opened for traffic on August 20, 1855, and the entire second division from St. Charles to the State line was opened to traffic on February 1, 1858. Thus, for the first time, railroad communication was established between St. Louis and St. Joseph, Missouri, on the west and Hannibal, Missouri on the east. Until 1864, however, it was necessary to unload all freight and passengers on the east bank of the river, ferry people and the goods across, and reload on the opposite side. In 1864, a car ferry arrangement was affected which eliminated the necessity for unloading and reloading on the west bank.

In 1879, the Wabash Railroad Company, operating west of the Mississippi, were merged into the Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroad Company.

In 1889, both the lines east and west of the Mississippi River were again reorganized, this time as the Wabash Railroad Co. Since it was not practical to make many improvements during the war years, the Wabash Railroad has made tremendous improve-



ments since then. These improvements include 100 per cent diesel service along with other outstanding additions.



L. M. Wiley



First Railroad Depot

## HOMER FAIR

In the 1890's fairs were held at the fairgrounds, which was located one mile north on the west side of the road. Horse racing, harness racing, and balloon ascension were held during the warm weather. One man was killed when his parachute failed to open. According to the records, not all racing was confined to the track, but it seems that some of the citizens engaged in such on their way home.



For many years the Homer Theater furnished amusement for the citizens of Homer. Home talent play, box socials, and medicine shows were conducted quite frequently. It was there that the first silent movies were shown, while music was played by home talent during the showing. The first sound movies were shown here also. For a while this building was used as a storage place for implements belonging to C. B. Butler. About 1940 this building was torn down and moved to the Oliver Smith farm where it was used in farm buildings.

About the same time the old Homer Theater was discontinued a new theater was started in its present location—the H. M. Smoot Building.



## OLD VILLAGE HALL



July 7, 1902, at a meeting of the Village Council it was decided that the Buildings and Grounds Committee should meet with the Auditing Board of the Township to discuss the proposed building of a public building. Said building to be built on the village lot and that the Village of Homer should be equal owners of said proposed building.

On August 3, 1903, it was decided an office building should be erected to be used jointly by the Township and Village authorities.

January 4, 1904, the Village President and Clerk were authorized by the Village Council to make a deed of the village grounds, upon which the new building stands, to the Township Officials.

## HOMER PARK

When the interurban came to Homer, W. B. McKinley bought the ground for the Homer Park (not quite 30 acres) from George and Gertie Eggleston. The site started at the old covered bridge and ran east. In the spring of 1905, C. B. Burkhardt took charge of Homer Park and built the first cabin which was on the site of Old Homer. Numerous other cabins were built, among them "Homer House," which was located on the east side of the road. This cabin, "Homer House," was moved with the rest of the buildings from the south side of the creek to South Homer on a lot just north of the Presbyterian Church. The Strayhorn family lived in it for years, then it was moved on a lot back of the I.T.S. Station on West Street. From there it was moved to a lot on Caroline Street, north of the school, where Mrs. Mackey occupied same for several years. Then Florence Sharp and her mother lived in this cabin. George M. Porter, in the early days of Homer Park, leased a site for a cabin, and wanting this old historical structure, bought it, moving it the fourth and last time back to where it

was built—not far from the Old Homer Mill.

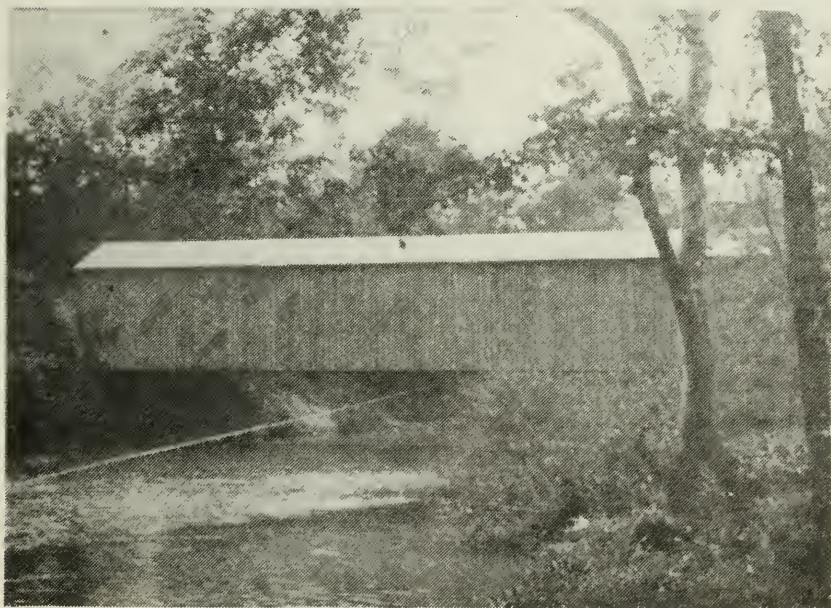
People came from far and near to enjoy the amusements of Homer Park which included boating, dancing, roller skating, swimming, movies, pool hall and concessions. On Sundays and Holidays band concerts and free acts were held. One of the feature attractions was a black bear which the children loved to feed. Mr. and Mrs. Burkhardt retired after 23 years of managing the park. Several other managers succeeded Mr. Burkhardt and the park finally closed in the early 1930's.







Dance Pavilion



Old Covered Bridge - Homer Park





Log Cabin - Homer Park



Flood



## HOMER COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

After the town of Old Homer had been moved to its new location, more people began to settle in and around Homer. The community grew very rapidly. By the year 1888 eleven school buildings had been built in what is now Homer Community Consolidated School District No. 208. Ten of these schools were built in the country within a radius of five to ten miles from Homer. They were all built on the same order, out of logs or clap boards. The seats were usually made of split logs and the desks of boards nailed along the walls. Enrollment ran all the way from 18 to 50 pupils. The following books were used in almost all the schools: McGuffey's Reader, Ray's Arithmetic, Pineo's Grammar, Mitchell's Geography, and McGuffey's Speller. Nearly all the schools were built on ground donated by some farmer and served the purpose of both school and Sunday schools.

The above described schools are as follows:

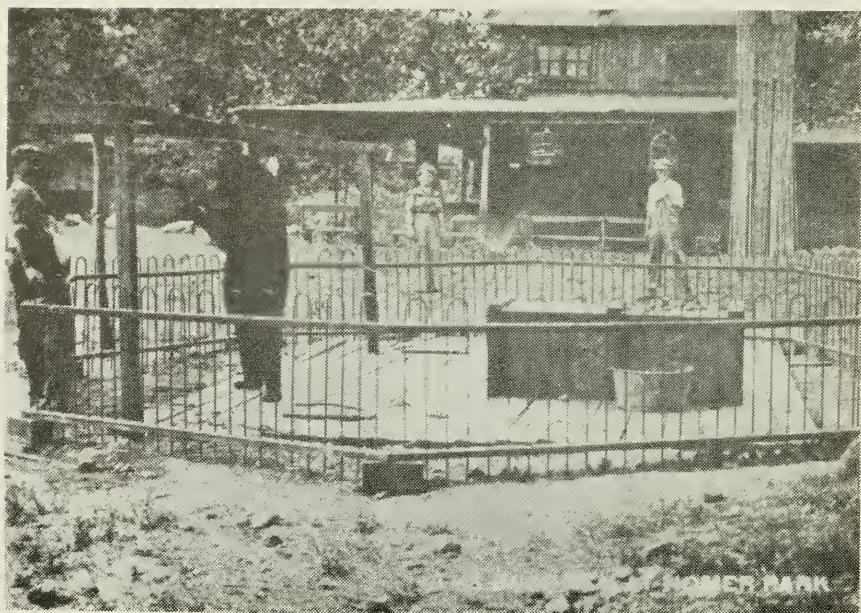
Name	Location	Yr. Built	Cons.
Clark, 3 mi. N.-1 mi. W. of Homer		1856	1951
Wide Awake, 1 mi. S.-3½ mi. E. of Homer		1860	1945
Liberty, 2 mi. W.-1 mi. S. of Homer		1861	1948
Lost Grove, 4 mi. S.W. of Homer		1861	1948
Fairland, 4 mi. S. of Homer		1861	1945
No. 10, 2 mi. S. of Homer			1945
Poage, 2½ mi. N.-1 mi. E. of Homer		1880	1951
Randolph, 3½ mi. W. of Homer		1880	1948
Maple Grove, 2½ mi. E. of Homer		1880	1945
Ray, 3 mi. S.-3 mi. E. of Homer		1885	1945

M. D. Coffeen and Samuel Groenendyke donated the west half of block 37 on the east side of town for school purposes. There the original four room brick school house was built in 1958. It was remodeled in 1873 and again in 1879. The frame building was built in 1887. It housed both grade and high school until 1914. Professor A. L. Starr was the first principal. The first high school class graduated in 1885.





Boat Landing

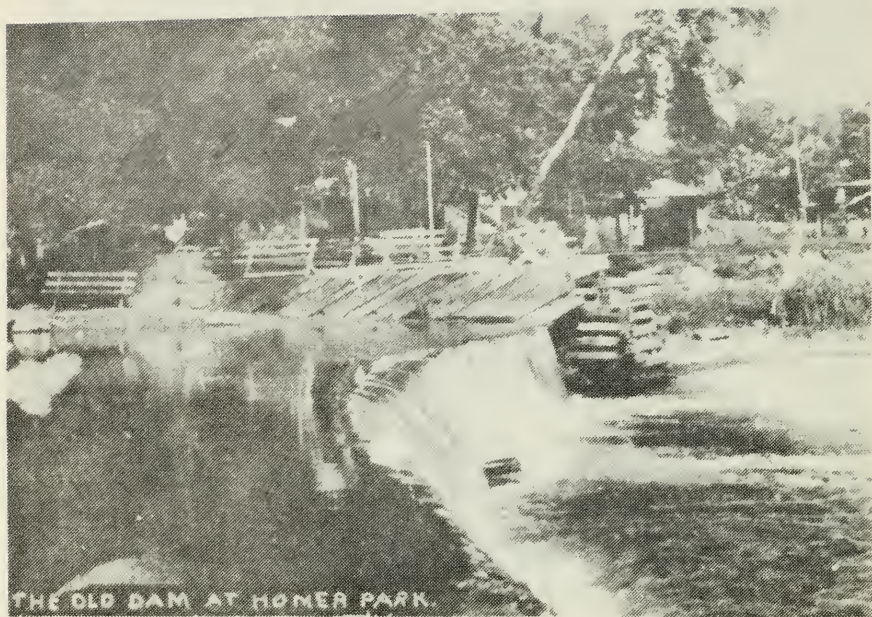


The Bear





Stood Where Park is now



Old Dam - Homer Park



The Chute - Homer Park



In early spring of 1914 five men met at the home of Harvey Allison and organized Homer High School District No. 302. They were Mr. Allison, Alva Junkens, J. H. Rutan, Joe McElroy and Loren Clark. C. D. Babb was elected president. It was decided to lease the upstairs of the Jurgensmeyer building on the corner of Main and First Streets, remodel it and use it for a community high school for seven years. At the end of the seven years a new building would be erected.

The contract was let in late fall of 1927. The cornerstone was laid by the Masonic Fraternity February 23, 1928, and the building was completed in the fall. William McIntosh was the first principal and school began in September, 1928. The old grade school had been remodeled, as were most of the country schools.

In 1945 it was voted to bring the children from five of the country schools into town and form the Homer Community Consolidated School District No. 208. The five schools were Maple Grove, Wide Awake, Ray, Fairland and No. 10. The other five soon followed and by 1951 all ten country schools had been abandoned. Several of the old buildings have been sold at public auction and converted into homes.

The population of the Homer Community Consolidated School District is approximately 1700. The child census taken in 1951 showed a total of 522 school-age and under school-age children in the district.

As time progressed, it became evident that a new addition was needed at the high school if the program was to remain on a high level. In 1950 plans were made for the addition of a farm-shop-bus garage building. This building was completed in 1951. An agriculture class room, farm shop, industrial arts shop and garage space for four buses is housed in the farm-shop building.

On February 28, 1953, a vote of the people determined that a new elementary building should be constructed. In the fall of 1953 plans were started and actual construction was soon underway. During September, 1954, eight classrooms of the new building were used. In December the entire building was turned over to the district by the General Contractor, Crispin Construction Co., Chrisman, Illinois. The electrical contractor was Judd Electrical Co., Bloomington, Illinois and the heating and plumbing was done by Reliable Plumbing and Heating Co. of Champaign. Mr. Joe Royer of Royer and Davis was the chief architect until his death. After that, Mr. Davis of the same firm took charge of the \$400,000 project.

Since the new elementary building is adjacent to the secondary building, students of both buildings use the cafeteria facilities of the new building. In turn, the music students of the elementary division use the music room located in the high school.

Additional ground was purchased to the north of the existing areas. The football field was moved from the east site to a position in the northwest part of the land.

The new elementary building contains: 8 average classrooms, 1 extra large classroom, one smaller classroom, which is used by special groups, four rest rooms, faculty lounge, office space, kitchen-cafeteria, boiler room, gymnasium and 1 dressing room on

either side of the gym.

Plans are being made to keep the school abreast of the changing life that confronts the children. A recent development is the formation of an all-school advisory council composed of individuals throughout the district.

In 1966 the Junior High Addition was added to the school. It consisted of six classrooms: High School Chemistry and Biology Rooms, Music Room, new offices, restrooms and a janitor supply room.



## CATHOLIC CHURCH

Those of the Catholic faith in Homer and surrounding communities met for worship every Sunday and Holy Day in the City Building in Homer for several years prior to 1952. By contribution of the congregation and other voluntary gifts, a building was purchased on E. Wabash Street. This building, the former George Evans Blacksmith Shop, one of the oldest structures in Homer, was rebuilt for use as a Catholic Church. A gas heater was installed and the furnishings and sacramentals were donated by the Sisters of St. Elizabeth's Chapel in Danville and St. Boniface in Clinton. The dream of the church started when a missionary priest held a week's mission in Homer Theatre about 10 years ago. Out of this mission came plans for a Catholic Church by a few local people and the determination of Fr. Daniel Monaghan of Philo. A priest from the Newman Foundation, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois serves the congregation at this time.



## HOMER CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Church of Christ at Homer was organized the first Lord's Day in June, A.D. 1856, with 11 members. Eli T. M. Hess was the Minister in charge. The original members were Samuel, Mary Ann, Margaret J. and John W. Beach; Diadema Gaston; John and Sarah Buchler, James E. and Elizabeth Gillespie; T. M. and Nancy Hess.

The first meetings were held by Elder Hess in the M. E. Church in Homer with services twice a month, but after organization they met in a dwelling place for worship. In 1859 they erected a church on South Church Street next to the railroad. The membership was 109 at this time with about 150 in attendance at Sunday School. About 1917 the church building was torn down.

Starting in 1924, services were held in the home of Dr. and Mrs. J. W. Walton. In 1925, a revival meeting was held in the Jurgensmeyer building. At the conclusion of this revival the church was formally organized. Services were then held in the

City Building until the fall of 1926. The Church's first Minister, A. Marion Phar, began his duties in the winter of 1926. Construction work on the basement of the new church building was started in the spring of 1926. The building was completed and dedicated a year later.

In 1960 an addition to the Church of Christ was dedicated. The new unit, built of stone blocks, added six classrooms, and two assembly rooms in a two story addition. A new heating unit was also added.



## FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist Church of Homer was organized in "Old Homer" in 1839, with Rev. Bradshaw serving as the first minister. The parish included an area lying between Urbana on the west, to a point east at Butler's Point near Catlin, and south about eight miles north of Mattoon. This group was called "Urbana Missions." The first quarterly conference was held in Urbana in 1840, and in this same year the first parsonage was built in Urbana. There were nine preaching places in the group: Okaw, Flat Branch, Rogers, Old Homer, Salt Fork, Sidney, Sargents, Urbana and Big Grove.

Old Homer Society remained a part of the Urbana Mission until 1853, when it was separated and set up as a station church. Because of the vast territory to cover by horse-back, the first parsonage was sold and the next one built in Homer. The church services at this time were held in the school house.

On March 5, 1866, George and Rachael Custer deeded the corner lot on which the present Methodist Church stands to the Trustees of the Church. Mrs. Elizabeth Jennings then became the donor of the first parsonage, which was later traded for the present location.

The first brick church was dedicated in 1866, at a cost of \$7000. This church subsequently was torn down and the cornerstone of the present church was laid on July 31, 1902. On July 12,



1903, the present Methodist Church was dedicated. The parsonage presently in use was built and completed at a cost of \$8000 in 1912.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the present Methodist Church building, an extensive project of church improvement was completed, which included a nine-room educational annex and a gravelled parking lot adjacent to the unit. Membership in the church increased over the years to a present listed conference membership of 616 members. Through the years the loyalty and devotion of members of this church have been indicated by fine memorial gifts from time to time. Memorial windows in the church bear the names of three men most influential in making possible the building of the original Homer Methodist Church: George Custer, Dr. James Core and J. M. Ocheltree.

An addition was constructed in 1972, when Rev. Harold Flessner was the minister. The consecration ceremony was on September 24, 1972. The \$70,000 building included an entryway, cloakroom, restrooms, classrooms, kitchen, utility room, ministers office and a large fellowship hall. Much of the work was done by members of the church. Floor coverings, drapes and other items were furnished by church organizations. Presently there are 410 on the membership roll.



First Methodist Church

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

On March 7, 1857, the church was organized by Rev. Enouch Kingsbury and A. P. Flech, with a membership of 17. Before erecting a building they met for worship in the Gilman Hall, which

was a frame building where Howard Hess now has his store. One of the first preachers was Mr. Campbell, a "Circuit Rider." He died here and was buried in Old Homer Cemetery. The first church building was erected in 1872, at a cost of \$4500. It was erected on a lot donated as a gift for a church building site by Michael D. Coffeen, and he and his wife deeded it to the Trustees in the presence of C. M. C. Elder of Homer, in the year 1872.

The building was just a plain, one room, rectangular frame structure with a pulpit in the east end of the room. It was lighted by a large dome suspended from the ceiling which consisted of 36 coal oil lamps. These were in use until electricity was installed, the coal oil lamps being replaced by electric ones. The entrance was through double doors where the beautiful stained glass window is now. Mr. Henry Ewing served as janitor for many years without pay. He rang the same old bell that hangs high in the belfry, calling pioneers to worship as it is calling today.

The Presbyterian Church, as it has been called these many years, was incorporated in 1901, and adopted as its corporate name "The First Presbyterian Church of Homer, Illinois." In 1909 the church was remodeled the second time and in the years following additions have been made.



First Presbyterian Church

## 1935

In 1935 the Homer High School student body held a strike in protest of the School Board firing of the principal. Some of the students tentatively identified are: Lowell Macey, Arnold Marlow, Herbert Mathews, Tom Koehner, Dale Wolf, Roy Tibbets, Roy Marlow, John Baird, Elmo Bray, Stanley Hardyman, Virginia Wienke, Annabell Smith, Pauline (West) Smith, Delores Tingley Berbaum and June Loyd on top of the truck. Standing in front of the truck: Carl Coddington, Wilbur McElroy, Wayne Brown, Burley, Tyler, Jim Allison, Walter Rohrshrieb, Charlotte Rogers Bryan, Jean Baird Block, Martha Tibbets, Lura Benner, Opel Wells, Donna Strohl, Nell Davis Taylor, Melton Heater, Don Place, Herman Tracy, Bill O'Mally, Irma Wiese, Margaret Madigan, Ed Orr, Freeman Riggs, Ray Price, Mary Tibbets.



## 1949



Milking the cow is Herbert Clem; looking on are: Joe Melton, Dorsey Chism, Ed Kenney. Youngsters in background include: Byron Dodd, Don Chism, Charley Wilder, Jerry Krugh, Louis Kuhn.

Herb Clem wanted fresh milk for his milkshake so Ed Kenney, owner of the drug store told him to bring his own cow in and milk it.

## CENTENNIAL - 1955

In December, 1954, Homer began making plans to celebrate its centennial. A general committee was appointed with Oliver Smith, president; Paul MacDonald, vice-president; Carlos Brewer, 2nd vice president; Helen C. Baird, secretary of general planning, Leslie Krugh, treasurer; Freda Havard, assistant treasurer; and Kathryn Williams, headquarters secretary. The Centennial was to be celebrated from May 27 to May 30, 1955. This committee was assisted by many Homer residents too numerous to mention. On May 27 The Homer High School Commencement was held followed by the dedication of the new grade school. A square dance followed. The egg breakfast was held at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 28. Oscar Baird was chairman with Floyd Fuller, Floyd Reynolds, the school cooks, and many others helping. It was attended by over 1200 people. The bells were tolled and the headquarters were opened. There were many attractions with free acts and WLS entertainers. A parade of the Sisters of the Swish and judging of beards, antique displays. In the evening was the Alumni Banquet at the High School followed by a Centennial Dance.

On Sunday, May 28, Sunday School services and union church services were held. The Buccaneers from WLS entertained in the afternoon. Babies crowned as King and Queen of Tomorrow were Neal Denniston and Mary Lou Baird. King and Queen of Yesteryear were Marion Tracey and Ella Hays, both 89. They were chosen from several citizens over 80 years old. A band concert was given by the 18th Infantry Division Band from Chanute Air Force Base. There was also more entertainment from WLS. In the evening a Pageant was given followed by fireworks and free acts.

On Monday, May 29, there was a horse-shoe pitching contest. This was followed by the American Legion Parade and Memorial Service at G.A.R. Cemetery with Major Reed as a speaker. At noon an old time pit barbecue was held, then free acts, WLS entertainers, a uni-cycle act and Chester the Clown.

Homer's centennial celebration was brought to a close with a pageant and fireworks.



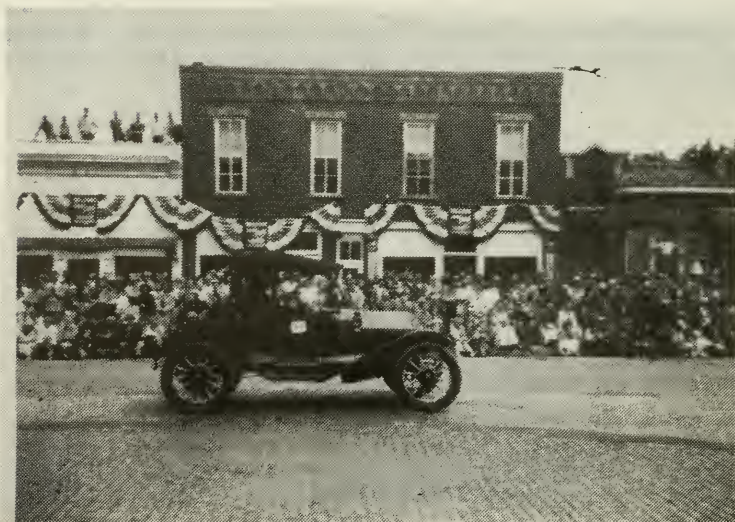
Serving at the Egg Breakfast, during the Centennial, May 28, 1955. Left to right: Art Brown, Mary Baird, Daisy Strohl, Jane Paulson, Rosalie Robertson, John Morrison, Nellie Morrison.





Centennial Belles dressed for church, May 1955: Left to right: Ava Clark, Glenna Bradley, Pauline Smith, Donna Unwiller, Margaret Unwiller, Virginia Baird, Linda Baird, Helen C. Baird and Ruth Erickson.

## CENTENNIAL PARADE





Lions Club Float - Helen C. Baird and Kathryn Williams



Salty Stayton and His Mules



## HOMER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Prior to the organization of the Homer Volunteer Fire Department in August 1939, fires were extinguished by volunteers using whatever equipment was available at the time. However, under the supervision of Roy Alsip, Secretary of the Illinois Fireman's Association and a State Instructor, the Homer Volunteer Fire Department held its first meeting on August 17, 1939. Leo F. Walz was selected Fire Chief. Twenty-five members made up the department. Mr. Walz served as Fire Chief until 1941 and subsequent chiefs were as follows: Thomas Shroyer 1941-1942, Floyd Reynolds 1942-1943, H. M. Waggoner 1943-1945, Thomas Shroyer 1945 to the present time.

The Fire Protection District was voted in 1947 and a new building to house the equipment was built in 1951 just north of the Old City Building. The district is supervised by three trustees: Don Tate, President; James Wienke, Secretary; and Tom Shroyer.

The equipment now consists of a F-7 Ford with 500 gallon a minute pump; Chevrolet with 750 gallon tank; Dodge with a 750 gallon tank; 1500 gallon portable tank; portable generator; 2 resuscitators; 3 Scott Air Packs, also supply tanks for same; two-way radios; 2600 feet 2½ inch hose; 800 feet 1½ inch hose; portable pump. The department has a Class A plus rating.

Fifty sections of land are in the District. Each farm has a number and route card enabling firemen to arrive in a minimum length of time.

There are now 26 members and regular meetings and drills are held in accordance with Underwriters requirements. The meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month.



Picture of the tree planted by the Lions Club in front of the Fire Department.



## NEW VILLAGE HALL

The building which was built in 1902, was purchased by the village in 1972 to house village offices and serve as a community building. Prior to that, village hall was located next to the Homer Fire Department.

Remodelling of the building began shortly after the village acquired it and is finished except for the upstairs where the Recreation Board hopes to restore the town's old opera house.

Besides the water department, the first floor houses the mayor's office, a conference room, Civil Defense office, South Homer Township office, meeting room, library, Scouts room, pre-school classroom, and a kitchen and dining room.

The upstairs of the community building is in the hands of the Recreation Department. Projects underway include restoring the gymnasium into the old opera house once in Homer, and remodeling the upstairs room and the balcony.

The community building has been used as an apartment building, the Homer First National Bank, grocery stores, music stores, doctors offices, storage spaces and until 1928 was used for high school classrooms. Graduation ceremonies and various other school activities were held in the gymnasium. The class of 1926 was the last class to graduate in the gym.

The ticket window, once used to sell tickets to basketball games and dances, will be restored and used by the Recreation Board to sell tickets to events held in the gym.

Rooms off the gymnasium will be remodeled into cloakrooms and offices.

## HOMER COMMUNITY LIBRARY

The library was started as a Community Service Project by Homer Girl Scout Troop #393. Eva Chism was troop leader and Bobbi Newlin was co-leader.

The library was started with books donated by local citizens. It was first set up in the old village hall in the northeast room on the main floor. It was staffed one afternoon and evening a week by volunteers.

After the Homer Women's Club took over sponsorship the village board bought and remodeled the old Jurgensmeyer Building and the library was moved. After passage of the tax referendum, the library joined the Lincoln Trail Library System and operated its first year on borrowed money.

At the present time the library has 2,800 books and is expected to grow steadily. They also sponsor several Story Hours and Reading Programs throughout the year.

Mrs. Pat Crutcher is the librarian with Wendy Chism as an assistant. Members of the library board are Mrs. Barbara Deffley, chairman; Gerald Webb, vice chairman; Mrs. Betty Lacey; Mrs. Pat Varvel; Mrs. Mae Jennings; Mrs. Jackie Reeley; and Mrs. Bobbi Newlin.

## HOMER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Homer Chamber of Commerce was re-activated in May, 1976. With the organization of the Chamber of Commerce, a solid base could be established that would provide the business, professional men and women of Homer, along with the support of the citizenry to collectively work for the betterment of Homer.

A local Chamber of Commerce is organized to serve its community and surrounding trade territory. The major responsibility of the Chamber of Commerce is the community's overall well being. The organization meets such responsibility in three steps.

- a. Examine the Community needs to determine what must be done to make our community a better place to live and to do business.
- b. To channel Community resources to fulfill these needs.
- c. To organize and develop the necessary leadership to guarantee that the organization will become an effective tool in the community.

A Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary organization of the business and community. It unites business and professional individuals and firms, thus creating a central organization which lends itself to improving business and building a better community. The Chamber of Commerce enables people to accomplish collectively what no one of them can do individually. The strength of the organization lies in attracting the greatest number of individuals into a membership of unity.

At the meeting of May 18, 1976, the following officers were elected to serve one (1) year:

President - Dale Wolfe  
Vice President - Gary Laughlin  
Treasurer - Maurice Wienke  
Secretary - JoAnne Hubert

The Board of Directors and the term to be served were elected as follows:

K. W. Fish - One (1) year.  
Douglas Driscoll and Mike Wakefield - Two (2) years.  
Harley Rogers and Jim Wakefield - Three (3) years.

As of July 20, 1976, membership consists of twenty-six (26) businesses.

By  
Jo Anne M. Hubert  
Secretary

## VILLAGE OF HOMER EMERGENCY SERVICES AND DISASTER AGENCY

ESDA, formerly known as Civil Defense was enacted into law in October, 1975.

Ernest Wienke, Jr., first director of Civil Defense in Homer from 1949 to 1961 helped Homer Fire Department in getting a generator run on gas in case of power failures and other equipment.

Phyllis Stevens replaced Wienke as director on September 7, 1961. She in turn was replaced by Robert M. Sarnecki in June, 1975. Sarnecki was named as coordinator to comply with the newly enacted law in Illinois.

Other officers for the ESDA in Homer are Mike Stayton, assistant coordinator; Bill Butler, ham radio operator; Roy Woodmansee, CB communications officer; John Place, treasurer and assistant communication officer; Howard Hackney, secretary; and Sheila Somers, shelter manager.

The local unit meets the first and third Thursdays of the month in Homer Community Building. After working with woefully inadequate equipment and space problems, the ESDA has its own room and fairly new radio equipment.

From June 1975 to April 1976, the storm spotters of Homer participated in five tornado watches and several since that date.

Several members are in the process of taking Heavy Duty Rescue and two members are taking an EMT class at Burnham Hospital.

By Mike Stayton

## HOMER HAPPENINGS

1955

Homer School Dedicated.

Old Grade School building sold to B. G. Schlueter who planned to use the material for farm buildings.

Homer Village Board bought the site of the former grade school.

1956

Six sets of twins noted in the area: Jeri and Judy Bear, Scott and Ann Trees, Ronnie and Donnie Frye, Mike and Diane Stayton, Hester and Lester Pruitt, Jean and Jane Brandon.

Main Street widened at a cost of approximately \$100,000.

1957

Gale Henry named Mayor.

Memorial Stone and Plaque placed in G.A.R. Cemetery.

Homer bought a police car, town had previously rented one.

Homer Presbyterian Church celebrated its 100th anniversary.

First addition was built onto the school.

1958

Homer Fire Department received a Class A plus rating for the department.

Village Board named a Park Committee to work with the Lions Club to develop a park on the site of the old grade school.

Fire damaged the Homer Post Office.

Fire following an explosion damaged the Homer Standard Service Station.

1959

Severe ice storm hits this area.

Methodist Church dedicated a new organ.

Testing began on soil for probable lake northwest of Homer.

Construction began on a new elevator for the Homer Grain Co.

Second addition built onto the school.

1960

Busenhart resigned as head of Homer Schools. He was a teacher and superintendent from 1947 until 1960.

Anderson Jewelry Store closed.

Lions Club purchased equipment for the Village Park.

Church of Christ build a new addition.

1961

Natural gas service began to residents of Homer.

Violent wind storm with 3½ inches of rain.

1962

Hunter's purchased the Smoot Lumber Company.

1963

Homer received its Zip Code - 61849.

Hess Building, built in the late 1800's, was razed.



Memorial Services held Nov. 25 in the Methodist Church for John F. Kennedy.  
Homer Women's Club sponsored the planting of the Flowering Crab Trees along Main Street.  
Third addition built onto the school.

1964

Jan. 12-13 eight inches of snow, 40 mph winds and 6 foot drifts gripped Homer.  
Floyd Lacey and Russel Shoaf were presented lifetime membership in the American Legion.  
First National Bank Building remodeled.

1965

Homer Grain Company expanded storage facilities by 500,000 bushels.  
Violent windstorm destroyed the David Dodd trailer home and damaged other Homer property.  
Old IGA building, which stood north of Sailor's Recreation, was torn down.

1966

Funds released for engineering work on Area Conservation Lake.  
Jeanes-Kirby Funeral Home gutted by fire.  
5000 persons flocked to Homer for Krazy Daze Festivities.  
Junior High addition built onto school.

1967

Second ice storm in 8 years.  
About 20,000 bushels of corn and a corn dryer were damaged in a fire at the Homer Grain Company; fire burned for two days.

1968

Homer Lake under construction.  
Diane Bolin qualified for finals of Woman's Olympic Gymnastic trials.

1969

Dale Wolf elected Mayor.  
Mrs. Grace Yerkes retired from teaching.  
Frank Canady retired after serving as postmaster for 15 years.

1970

Jettie Hocker retired as Librarian of Homer High School.  
Homer Booster Club bought bleachers for the Athletic Field.

1971

Homer Village Board granted permission to the Girls Scouts to start a Library in the Old Village Hall.  
Fire gutted Joe Taylor's house early Christmas Day.  
Homer Lumber Yard burned.  
Senior Citizens organized.

1972

Ruth Allen retired after 43 years of teaching.  
Village bought the Grab It building.

1973

Methodist Church built its Educational Wing.

1974

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Clay leave Homer Schools after 9 years.  
Homer Panthers became Regional Basketball Champs.  
William K. Williams family built a concrete boat in their back-  
yard.

1975

More than 700,000 bushels of corn piled up at Homer Grain Company  
due to a strike of tug boat operators in Baltimore.  
Booster Club Drive provides lights for the High School Football  
Field.

1976

The Old Homer Depot was razed to make way for a new metal build-  
ing.

## BICENTENNIAL PROJECTS

Homer was named a Bicentennial Community by the National American Revolution Bicentennial Administration. Signs designating this have been placed below the population signs at the Village limits.

The Champaign County Bicentennial Commission has named two Historic sites in the Homer area. Markers have been placed on these sites and they have also been listed in a Historic Tours Guide compiled by the Commission. One of the sites is north of Homer on Route 49 at the Salt Fork Bridge where the town originally stood. Later this area was well known as Old Homer Park. The other is the C. B. Burkhardt home. It was built in 1857 and was owned by C. B. Burkhardt when he operated Homer Park. Formerly owned by the Henry Lewis family, it is now owned and occupied by the Ernie Taylor family.



Approximately 400 persons visited the craft display and demonstrations held in the Village Hall on April 4. Crafts demonstrated were: candle dipping, chair caning, rug weaving, leather tooling, ceramics, quilting, rug hooking, quilling, spinning, cake decorating, pine cone flowers, corn husk dolls, metal tooling, applehead dolls, tatting, crocheting, knitting and several other crafts.





Candle Dipping - Nondus Wakefield



Rope Making - Dean Chism, Dale Wakefield, Bud Comer



Applehead Dolls - Mildred Hall



Spinning - Beth Yancey; Needlepoint - Bonnie Umbarger; Macrame - Barb Wakefield

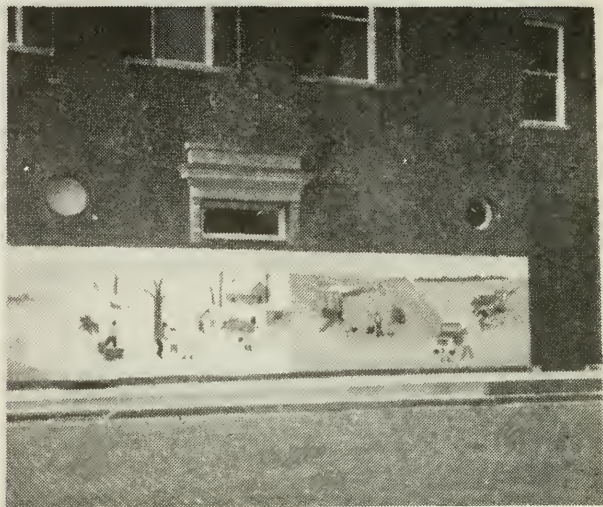


Quilting - Pauline Smith, Ruby West, Lois Horner

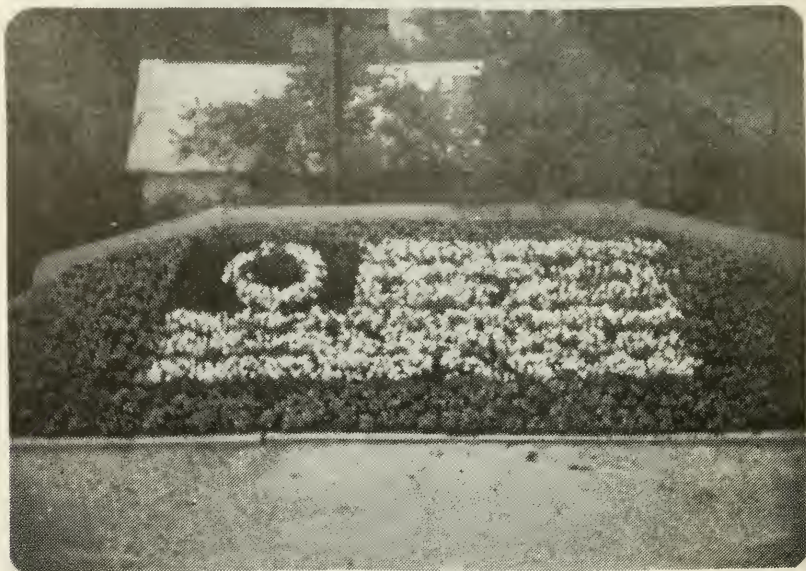


Caning - Eva Chism

An historical mural on the south side of the Village Hall shows the History of Homer from the time of the Indian to the present day. The committee responsible for the mural was Sandy Bales, Sharon Ambler, Melinda Bales, Tammy Chism, Bonnie Lacey, Bonita Mullins and Lee Ann Newlin.



A floral flag, planted on the grounds of the American Legion Post #290, was the Bicentennial project of the Legion and the Legion Auxiliary.





A Bicentennial quilt, made by the Homer Home Extension, was raffled off at the Fourth of July celebration. The quilt was red, white and blue, with the fifty states, their state flower and bird represented.

A Bicentennial Flag and a certificate signed by President Gerald Ford were presented to Mayor Dale Wolf by Bobbi Newlin, chairman of the Homer Bicentennial Committee. The flag representation acknowledge Homer as an official Bicentennial Community. This ceremony was held during the Fourth of July Celebration at the park.

The Homer Recreation Board sponsored the Annual Freedom Celebration at the Village Park. A union church service opened the festivities, followed by a flag raising, country music, games and contests, the Second Annual Creeper Races, a miniature tractor pull, fireworks and a dance.



Establishing a local museum is the other lasting project proposed by the Bicentennial Committee. It is hoped that we will be able to get started on this project this fall. Any proceeds from the sale of this book will be used to further this goal.

To honor the senior citizens of our community, a list of the citizens over eighty has been compiled by several persons. Mrs. Zoe (Dick) Clutter contacted all listed and obtained permission to publish their names and birthdates.

### HOMER CITIZENS OVER 80

Helen C. Baird  
Helen M. Baird  
Charles Carter  
Mable Carter  
Scott Craig

August 19, 1893  
December 22, 1892  
October 6, 1889  
October 5, 1890  
June 13, 1880

Clell (Dick) Clutter	March 3, 1886
Zoe Clutter	February 4, 1890
Ava Clark	April 29, 1882
Herbert Clem	June 17, 1888
Chester Davis	October 30, 1891
Clara Dees	September 5, 1893
Maude Dickson	July 30, 1886
Hattie Edens	February 23, 1892
Hazel Esworthy	June 6, 1895
Gordon Freeman	September 21, 1894
Eva Mae Hardin	January 29, 1891
Arthur Hardyman	May 25, 1893
Edward C. Harvey	April 30, 1890
Jacob Henning	December 8, 1885
Charles Hillard	May 27, 1892
Nellie Johnson	March 29, 1878
Nellie Killian	December 4, 1894
Chester Kizer	June 29, 1895
Grace Krukewitt	February 27, 1894
Cora Maddox	March 19, 1891
John Madigan	April 23, 1891
Etta Magers	October 14, 1891
Lura Maxwell	June 24, 1890
Clara Mitchell	March 4, 1896
Robert Morton	February 3, 1892
William Nussmeyer	July 13, 1893
Elizabeth Oaks	November 14, 1894
Marie O'Neil	January 18, 1895
Claude Palmer	November 20, 1892
Effie Parker	January 16, 1893
William Peters	May 10, 1889
Alicia Place	January 17, 1892
Anna Rogers	February 5, 1889
Freda Rohrscheib	December 25, 1893
Allen Rutan	May 1, 1891
Anna Rutan	December 3, 1892
Beulah Satterfield	September 18, 1889
Warren Satterfield	August 9, 1882
Ruby Shoaf	March 4, 1893
Frank Smith, Sr.	September 2, 1887
Henrietta Smoot	December 15, 1891
Hattie Strohl	November 11, 1883
Bessie Sylvester	February 17, 1892
Duane Temple	September 25, 1895
Ethel Timmerman	July 11, 1886
Ellis Tracey	January 28, 1892
Anna Pearl Walz	November 1, 1891
Amanda Whole	April 8, 1890
Reimer Witt	January 3, 1879

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the people who put together the 1955 Centennial Book and also the following people who loaned pictures, articles and other materials used in this book.

Helen C. Baird, Edna Lewis, Ruth Allen, Theresa Wilson, Dean Chism, Mike Stayton, Joanne Hubert, The Homer Enterprise, Charley Richards, and Ernie Taylor.





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Brewer Chevrolet Co.  
CILCO - Central Illinois Light Co.  
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Coles Variety Store  
Country Companies Insurance - Art Brown  
Craver, Nolan, Jr. - Attorney  
Cromwell Shell  
Dale Wolf Real Estate  
Danner, Lewis R., Homer Contractor  
Davis Hybrid Corn Co. - Robert S. Davis  
DeKalb Seeds - Frank Smith  
DeKalb Seeds - Kent Krukewitt  
Delores Richard's Beauty Salon  
Driscoll Pharmacy  
Erickson, John E., DDS  
Fashion Beauty Salon  
First National Bank, Homer  
Fish Insurance Agency  
Flowers for All Occasions - Le Ann Benner  
Grimes Service  
Homer Grain Co.  
Jerry's Barber Shop  
King Pin Lanes  
Kirby Funeral Home  
Kustard Kup - Tom and Shirley Mizwicki  
Laughlin's Barber Shop  
Lee Varvel Real Estate and Tax Service  
Mary Jane's Fashions  
Moore's Bait Shop  
Nancy's Beauty Salon  
Patton Trucking  
Pioneer Seeds - John Place  
Pioneer Seeds - Ray, Gary & Ralph Place  
Ralph's Body Shop  
Roger's Auction  
Rohl Custom Colors  
Sailor's Recreation  
Tropical Paint & Roofing Co. - Russell  
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